

is possible to live a life of nonviolence, even there. An added deterrent to his making the move is the widespread cynicism among prison-wise inmates toward outside programs designed to improve their lot. Many such programs turn out to be mediocre in quality, or clearly designed to make them conform to a system that fails to recognize their rights, needs or human dignity.

But nonviolence training came into Green Haven under the best possible auspices: at the request of an inmate, Roger Namu Whitfield. Namu—quiet, intelligent and a natural leader—is trying desperately to make something meaningful of a long term in prison. He has developed a program (called the Think Tank Concept) in which inmates work with members of street gangs and other youth in custody in an effort to steer them away from a life of crime. But getting the young people to break out of their psychology of total violence has been a formidable task for the inmates, who are motivated and speak the language, but who lack training in the necessary techniques. When Whitfield heard about the Quaker nonviolence training program, it seemed natural to ask their help.

In response to his request, the Quaker Project on Community Conflict took an experienced, interracial team of trainers into Green Haven for an intensive, three-day nine session program for nine inmates in March, 1975. Now, less than two years later, seven inmates were graduating from a program that had gone beyond nonviolence training and prepared them to train other inmates. During that time, nonviolence has taken on a new image for a number of prisoners, some of whom have learned in the program what the general public doesn't know: that nonviolence demands strength, not weakness, and is *not* for people who are afraid to fight.

Others in the room who had not participated in nonviolence training, listened intently when Bernard Lafayette explained what nonviolence is. Some of the prisoners were there only because there was food and the promise of something different happening. Others had chosen to entertain visitors at the graduation instead of in the waiting room. A few were embracing loved ones. But attention was paid during the speeches; there wasn't a sound in the room. (Namu said afterward: "Everybody here is looking for something.")

Bernard Lafayette, formerly with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, long active in peace and civil rights struggles and mediator at Wounded Knee, has all the credentials necessary to talk to inmates. A director of the National Institute for Campus Ministries, he had flown up from St. Louis at his own expense for this meaningful ceremony at the prison where he had been a trainer in 1975.

"I've been an inmate 23 times myself," he said. "I know what it means to be inside. It's a political and economic situation. You're political captives. Some people think you're thieves, but if you want to find out where the money is, you can check bank accounts." (This got a big laugh, as was intended).

Lafayette laid down three requirements for living nonviolently: a tough mind, a tender heart and a together

philosophy. There are times when nonviolence can be a kind of warfare, he told the men, but it requires more of the mind than the body, unlike conventional warfare, based on materiel, which demands little mental energy.

In the training sessions, Lafayette had told them that "if one dares to develop in himself the inward resources and qualities that all men have, he can become the powerful being that he seeks to become. He can acquire that kind of inner freedom that can't be changed." But nonviolence is practicing and experimenting all the time, he said. "You're testing the whole thing, but more than anything else, in nonviolence you're testing yourself. When we develop the ability to deal with situations, we lose our fear."

He described his experience in Mississippi jails, where a black man has to answer "Yes sir" and "No sir" or suffer a beating. With his dignity at stake, Lafayette made up his mind that he would not say "sir" or be beaten either. Asked if he was from Nashville, Tennessee, he would repeat "I'm from Nashville, Tennessee." Asked if he'd been in the Navy, he would answer, "That is correct. I've been in the Navy."

Emphasizing that it takes a tough mind to get out of certain situations, he said you must determine what you are

going to do and then come up with alternatives. To live nonviolently, a person must redefine himself. "You must decide who you are. Just to do that, to define who you are, is revolutionary." Looking around at the inmates, he continued: "I know people who are doctors of philosophy in here; although they may not have degrees, they have philosophies. When they get into trouble, they can put it back together. And I know people who have degrees who wouldn't know a philosophy if they saw one."

Bernard Lafayette learned about violence early, as a member of a Philadelphia street gang, but he has relied on nonviolence for

many years. As a trainer, he emphasizes the importance of insisting on being treated like a man and puts great stress on maintaining eye contact, "so that you will always be a person to your opponent." His advice comes out of a life of struggling for the most elementary civil rights. Once, he was pistol-whipped and knocked down three times by a man commissioned to kill him. The third time he got up from the ground, blood streaming from his head, and gazed into his adversary's eyes, the man turned and fled.

Lafayette's definition of nonviolence is worth remembering: "Nonviolence means you have a philosophy involving your total self—mind, body and the strength of your soul—in unity, and that you can employ that philosophy in interaction with others." If you have that, you don't need weapons or extra equipment: "There is more to man than weapons."

"What if they find you with nothing?" he asked, in closing. "If you have the power of nonviolence, you have it when they catch you naked."

Perhaps the most exuberant person at the prison that day was Lawrence Apsey, a trainer, as well as originator and administrator of the nonviolence program in New York prisons. A retired lawyer and a Quaker, with carefully-



Cecil Seabury presenting certificate to Santos Cepeda, while Bernard Lafayette and Lee Stern look on.